MILITARY INTELLIGENCE DIVISION INFORMATION BULLETIN NO. 6

NOTES ON JAPANESE WARFARE ON THE MALAYAN FRONT.

WAR DEPARTMENT
WASHINGTON, D. C.

[redacted]

MILITARY INTELLIGENCE DIVISION
WAR DEPARTMENT
Washington, January 9, 1942

INFORMATION BULLETIN
No. 6
MID 461

NOTICE

The information contained in this series of bulletins will be restricted to items from official sources which are reasonably confirmed.

This document is being given an approved distribution, and no additional copies are available in the Military Intelligence Division. For provisions governing its reproduction, see Letter TAG 350.05 (9-19-40) M-B-M.

NOTES ON JAPANESE WARFARE

ON THE

MALAYAN FRONT

FOREWORD

The information in this bulletin, other than photographs and descriptions of weapons, has been extracted from reports submitted by American official observers with Allied Forces now engaging the Japanese in the Far East. The photographs are reproduced from an album recently published by the Tokyo Asahi ("Morning Sun"), one of the leading vernacular newspapers in Japan, showing Japanese troops in their operations against the Chinese. These photographs should be accepted with reserve, because they were published as propaganda. Nevertheless, they give a general idea of the Japanese soldier's equipment and his methods of warfare. In order that our troops may familiarize themselves with the appearance of their enemy, it is suggested that these photographs, which are themselves not classified as Restricted, might be removed and placed on bulletin boards.

[redacted]

CONTENTS

[redacted]

ILLUSTRATIONS
(at end of text)

[redacted]

[redacted]

NOTES ON JAPANESE WARFARE

ON THE

MALAYAN FRONT

1. TACTICS OF GROUND FORCES

a. The Japanese use roads until contact is established with hostile forces. Then, avoiding frontal attack, they make, wherever possible, flanking movements through the jungle and the rubber plantations. The Japanese also make expert use of small craft, including launches and landing boats, in carrying out flanking movements by river or along the coast.

b. Japanese companies advance behind one and two-man patrols which are armed with submachine guns. When the patrols are fired upon, they do not stop, but maneuver around the flanks and infiltrate deep into the British position toward their objective, attempting to reduce any opposition met.

c. If British units counterattack, Japanese advance parties permit them to pass through and then turn and deliver fire on the flanks and rear of the counterattacking troops.

d. The Japanese work their way through the jungle with ease. They display considerable initiative, vigor, and physical stamina and patiently wait under cover to take advantage of an opportunity to advance.

e. The Japanese have used the following tactics:

(1) Orders are issued orally for attacks on specific objectives;
(2) Small tanks accompany infantry attacks;
(3) No type of terrain is considered an obstacle;
(4) Attacks are by aggressive infiltration, followed up by the forward elements of the supporting troops and determinedly pushed toward a successful conclusion;
(5) Front-line troops are equipped with submachine guns and light machine guns, thus providing a volume of fire that seems to indicate heavier armament than that actually possessed.

f. So far the Japanese have used mainly machine guns, submachine guns, mortars, and grenades, but not much artillery. They are, however, beginning to increase the use of artillery. Mortars and grenades especially have been very effective.

g. The British have come to the following conclusions in regard to

[redacted]

the tactics of the Japanese:

(1) A linear or static defense is ineffectual. To overcome such a disadvantage, the best system of defense would be self-contained combat posts as pivots of maneuver for an aggressive reserve. These self-contained posts would have all-round defense.

(2) The Japanese have unusual aptitude for overcoming terrain obstacles.

(3) After infiltrating to the flanks and to the rear of the opposing forces, the Japanese press home the assault with great determination.

h. Night Operations. The Japanese are reported to have been rafting troops down rivers at night.

2. TACTICS OF AERIAL ATTACKS ON AIRDROMES

a. Japanese bombers attack airdromes while their fighters draw R.A.F. fighters into combat. The bombers fly some distance from the field after the initial attack and wait until the R.A.F. fighters, because of lack of fuel, are compelled to land. Then the Japanese bombers return and attack the R.A.F. fighters before they can refuel and take to the air again. The R.A.F. is thus unable to intercept the bombers. Of course, the success of these tactics is made possible by the small number of R.A.F. fighters in the area.

b. Effective bombing of objectives around the edges of airdromes, sparing the runways, has been accomplished because the Japanese bombers have been confronted with little opposition. When the leader in the formation signals, all the planes in the formation release bombs simultaneously. Airdrome strafing is the main activity of the Japanese fighter planes.

3. AERIAL ATTACKS ON GROUND TROOPS AND INSTALLATIONS

a. Small flare bombs in strings of six to eight are being dropped by some Japanese planes. These flares have a percussion-striker explosive charge in the nose; and when they burst on impact, they give off a flash and cloud of smoke. On the ground they leave a brown stain.

b. Japanese planes attack communications, and trucks left exposed during daylight hours have been destroyed.

4. ANTITANK DEFENSE. The British have found it difficult to maintain tank obstructions on the roads, because the Japanese steadily harass

[redacted]

the British flanks by infiltration. Tanks are employed with tactics similar to those used by the infantry, as described in Section 1.

5. MATERIEL

a. Anti-personnel Air Bomb. This bomb has a relatively ineffective shrapnel load encased in lead.

b. Individual Equipment

(1) Only a minimum of equipment is carried in addition to arms and ammunition, and this is generally very light.

(2) Rubber belts which can be blown up for crossing rivers are a part of the equipment.

(3) Dress is often varied and non-military. At night, commanders wear crossed or single white sashes; N.C.O.'s, white arm bands.

c. Small Arms. The regular bullet used in the rifle and in the light and heavy machine guns is a 6.5-mm. pointed Spitzer-type nickel-steel-coated lead projectile which leaves a small wound. The 6.5-mm. bullet is approximately .25 caliber.

d. Grenades and Submachine Guns. Among the light equipment are many grenades and a large proportion of submachine guns. See figure 1 for a group of grenade throwers. The following description of the Heavy Grenade Thrower, Model 89, is taken from the Japanese Handbook (WD TM 30-480, May 14, 1941), pages 79-80:

Weight (total)	10.5 lbs.
Length	20 in.
Length of tube	10 in.
Caliber	50 mm. (about 2 in.)
Ammunition used	Model 89 shell Time-fuze hand grenade Signal grenade Smoke grenade Practice grenade
Range for model 89 shell	140 to 700 yds.
Range for other ammunition	40 to 200 yds.
Signal, vertical	100 yds.
Time of fuze	7.5 sec. after discharge or on impact
Rate of fire	One man--10 shots per min.; two men--20 shots per min.
Effective area of burst, model 89 shell	50-yd. radius
Time-fuze hand grenade	25-yd. radius

[redacted]

[redacted]

e. Machine Guns

(1) Light Machine Gun. Figure 2 shows the Nambu Light Machine Gun, Model 1922. The following description of this weapon is taken from the Japanese Handbook, pages 76-77:

(a) The Nambu Light Machine Gun, Model 1922, is a gas-operated, air-cooled, hopper-fed gun with a bipod support permanently fixed to the piece near the muzzle. It is normally fired from the prone position at ground targets. The hopper has a capacity of 30 rounds, which are loaded by placing in the hopper, one on top of the other, six 5-round clips of rifle ammunition. These are forced into the feed mechanism by a follower pressing down from above. The principal measurements and characteristics of this gun are as follows:

Weight	22.44 lbs.
Length, over-all	43.5 in.
Caliber	0.256 in. (6.5 mm.)
Rifling	4 grooves, right twist
Rear sight	Graduated from 328 to 1,640 yds.; no windage or drift corrector
Muzzle velocity	2,375 ft. per sec.
Maximum range	4,374.4 yds.
Cyclic rate of fire	500 rds. per min.
Effective rate of fire	150 rds. per min. in bursts of five

(b) Although the light machine gun is usually fired from the prone position supported by its bipod mount, a tripod mount, model 1922, is carried by the gun squad for use as desired. When the legs are fully extended and the tripod is raised to its maximum serviceable elevation, the gun is about 4 feet from the ground. The tripod contains both traversing and elevating devices, but when the piece is to be used against aircraft, the elevating device is unfastened so that the weapon may be moved freely, both vertically and horizontally. When the piece is mounted on this tripod, the legs of the bipod are folded back along the barrel. The weapon is essentially a machine rifle when the bipod is used and a light machine gun when mounted on the new tripod.

(2) Heavy Machine Gun. Heavy Machine Gun, Model 92 (1932) (figure 3), is an improvement on Heavy Machine Gun, Model 3 (1914) (figure 4), which is described in the Japanese Handbook, page 77. Model 92 is now in general use in the cavalry and infantry arms, though, it is estimated, not in sufficient quantity to equip the entire Japanese Army in a large-scale offensive. The description of Model 92 which follows is taken from a report of an official observer:

[redacted]

(a) Mount. The mount is geared for elevating, and a small hand-wheel on the front of the tripod connects with the elevating screw. At the end of each of the tripod legs are attachments allowing for the insertion of handles. The rear handle is U-shaped. These handles add greatly to the ease of manipulation, and are also utilized for antiaircraft fire. In the latter case the U-shaped bar becomes the supporting spade of the gun, and two soldiers elevate the muzzle by means of holding the front handles over their heads. Such a firing position for this comparatively heavy gun gives poor accuracy.

(b) Measurements and Characteristics:

Weight, gun	61.6 lbs.
Weight, tripod	60.5 lbs.
Length of gun	43 in.
Length of bore	25 in.
Caliber	0.303 in. (7.7 mm.)
Rifling	4 grooves, right twist, one turn in 20 cm.
Life of barrel	40,000 rds. (approx.)
Traversing angle	360° of which approx. 35° on arc graduated in mils
Maximum angle of elevation	11°
Maximum angle of depression	15°
Ground clearance of barrel:	
Low firing position	14.4 in.
High firing position	21.4 in.
Rear sight	Graduated from 300 to 2,700 m.; no correction for windage or drift
Cyclic rate of fire	450 rds. per min.
Maximum effective rate of fire	About 200-250 rds. per min.
Muzzle velocity	2,700 ft. per sec. (estimated)
Maximum range	4,587 yds. (4,300 m.)

The clip holds 30 rounds of ammunition and is inserted into the gun from the left side. These clips are made of pasteboard and are loaded at the factory, thus eliminating pre-loading preparation on the part of the gun crew. When not in firing position, the gun is covered with a leather case.

(c) Antiaircraft Adapter (figure 3). The gun is equipped with an antiaircraft adapter, which is inserted between the gun proper and the tripod elevating screw. This adapter allows a maximum angle of 80 degrees and a vertical range of 1,000 meters. It requires less than a minute for an experienced crew to attach this adapter to the gun.

A brace attached from the adapter to the gun is telescopic and

[redacted]

allows the gun to be held firmly at any desired elevation. The high elevated sight is detachable and is used only when the gun is operated as an antiaircraft weapon. When the sight and the adapter are not in use, they are carried in a canvas-covered case slung over the back of one of the ammunition carriers.

f. Mortars. The Japanese have at least four experimental mortars. Figure 5 shows the 90-mm. Mortar, Model 94. Its characteristics have been reported as follows:

Maximum range	4,155 yds.
Minimum range	612 yds.
Weight of bomb	11 lbs. 10 ozs. (with chemical filling)
Total weight in action	350 lbs. 8 ozs.

A mortar projectile of unknown caliber has been reported to have a small blasting effect

g. Infantry Battalion Gun. The Japanese have another weapon which combines the lightness and portability of the mortar with the stability of a field gun. This weapon is called the Infantry Battalion Gun, Model 92, and is shown in figure 6. Figure 7 shows the same model with a redesigned carriage. Because of the weakness of the crank-shaped axle, it is presumed that the newer models have straight axles and so mount the gun higher. The following description of this weapon is taken from the Japanese Handbook, pages 82-83:

(1) General. The Infantry Battalion Gun, Model 92, is a 70-mm. rifled gun capable of delivering fire from a range of 200 to 2,800 yards. Its characteristics are--

Weight:	
Gun	101 lbs.
Mount	77 lbs.
Mounted gun and caisson	420 lbs.
Length of bore	30 in. (approx.)
Over-all length	27 in.
Mounted over-all length	5 ft. (approx.)
Width of wheel tread	27 in. (approx.)
Effective range	300 to 1,500 yds.
Traverse	45°
Elevation	-10° to +50°
Danger area of burst	40 yds. (approx.)

(2) Breechblock. Two threaded segments, rotating and opening downward.

[redacted]

(3) Carriage

(a) Recoil Mechanism. Length of recoil, about 4 inches.

(b) Traversing and Elevating Mechanism. Traversing handwheel on the left of the barrel and elevating handwheel on the right. Both handwheels are operated by the gunner, who lays first for direction, then for elevation. Elevating mechanism is similar to that of our old pack howitzer. Traverse is about a heavy pintle mounted on the axle.

(c) Shield. Armor plate about one-eighth of an inch thick.

(d) Trail. Split 5 feet long, welded except where riveted to spade.

(e) Panoramic Sight (same as field artillery). Mounted on the sight bracket on the left side of the piece. The sight bracket includes a range drum with four divisions marked in mils, an elevating bubble, and a cross bubble for correcting for difference in level of wheels.

(4) Ammunition. Semifixed with brass case. High explosive shrapnel and smoke shells are used. The range is extended by increasing the powder charge. At maximum range the time of flight for the different powder charges is--

Charge No. 1 - - - - - - - - - - -	30 sec. (3,075 yds.)
Charge No. 2 - - - - - - - - - - -	25 sec. (1,975 yds.)
Charge No. 3 - - - - - - - - - - -	20 sec. (1,300 yds.)
Charge No. 4 - - - - - - - - - - -	15 sec. (985 yds.)

Minimum permissible ranges with instantaneous fuzes employing low-angle fire varies with the powder charge, elevation of gun, and target. With ground level ranges are--

Charge No. 1 - - - - - - - - - - -	1,100 yds.
Charge No. 2 - - - - - - - - - - -	660 yds.
Charge No. 3 - - - - - - - - - - -	225 yds.
Charge No. 4 - - - - - - - - - - -	110 yds.

Minimum ranges with delayed-action fuzes ground level are--

Charge No. 1 - - - - - - - - - - -	660 yds.
Charge No. 2 - - - - - - - - - - -	330 yds.
Charge No. 3 - - - - - - - - - - -	330 yds.
Charge No. 4 - - - - - - - - - - -	330 yds.

[redacted]

[redacted]

Rate of fire: 10 rounds per minute, 5 rounds per box.

(5) Other Vehicles

(a) Limber. This is a simple box mounted on an axle. Two boxes of ammunition, sights, and accessories are carried in the limber chest.

(b) Caisson. Similar in construction to the limber and contains three boxes of ammunition.

6. SUPPLY

Figures 8 to 12 inclusive are included simply to show some methods used by small units in supplying ammunition, food, and water to the front lines. Of particular interest is the method employed by the Japanese soldier in transporting ammunition (figure 9). It will be noted that the ammunition boxes are carried as shoulder packs, leaving the arms free for negotiating difficult terrain and permitting greater freedom of action under fire. Figure 10 shows the preparation of simple food, and figure 11 shows a method of getting it forward over exposed terrain. This method is of interest, for it indicates that advance elements, even though they may be held to the ground by hostile fire, can still be fed by a simple process. What holds true for the supply of ammunition to small units also holds true for the supply of water, as large canteens strapped on the back of the soldier will be noted in figure 12.

7. THE FIFTH COLUMN

a. According to a prisoner taken in northwestern Malaya, the Japanese landed without rations and got help from Fifth Columnists.

b. The Japanese are making wide use of propaganda leaflets dropped from the air.

c. Civilians dressed in the uniforms of British-Indian soldiers have operated with the Japanese. In some instances they even know the British-Indian N.C.O.'s by name.

8. REPORT OF FOREIGN CORRESPONDENT

The following excerpts from an account by a war correspondent with the British Forces in Northern Malaya showing Japanese methods of warfare are included in this bulletin for informational purposes. The account has not been confirmed, but the reader can in some instances draw his own conclusions from the confirmed data contained in Sections

[redacted]

1 to 7 inclusive of this bulletin.

. . . . . .

"Japanese successes have been attained through superiority of numbers and equipment and the use of clever but simple tactics especially adapted to the tropical lands. British officers at the front describe Japanese losses as 'enormous', but emphasizo that the attackers keep pouring in, apparently determined to advance at any cost. ...

"The Japanese equipment includes one innovation, a two-man carrier, probably especially designed for use in the tropics. This little carrier can negotiate smaller streams, rice fields, rubber groves, and thin jungles, but is not heavily enough armored to resist British antitank rifles. It is proving a useful weapon in combination with the heavier tanks and armored cars that the Japanese possess.

"The Japanese tactics are based on infiltration and mobility. Apparently groups of men are simply being told to reach a certain objective many miles ahead, and they scatter all over the map to do it. When groups encounter a British strong point, they do not attack, but melt away and filter past along the flanks of the British position, concealing their movements in jungles of rubber trees. The strong point is later attacked by strong Japanese forces armed with heavy equipment, and simultaneously the Japanese close in on the flanks and rear.

"Japanese advance patrols armed with tommy guns sometimes for days are constantly working toward an objective, often lying low in the dense undergrowth to conceal themselves from the British. A number of advance units are sent to attack the same objective, so that if some meet grief on the way, the others will slip through and gain the goal. The Japanese obviously have made an intimate study of their terrain and apparently know every road and path in Northern Malaya.

"The Japanese regulars have a unique uniform, consisting only of light khaki shorts, a sleeveless upper garment that looks like an undershirt, and low rubber shoes. The Japanese tactics are leading to a savage warfare of movement, ambush, surprise, and encirclement. An American military observer I met at the front said:

"'It is like Indians fighting with tommy guns.'

"The Japanese have air superiority in Northern Malaya, but so far they have not been using planes much at the actual front in bombing or strafing. The raids on British airdromes are bringing air battles in which the British, despite numerical inferiority, emerge victorious.

[redacted]

"British land forces are rapidly adapting themselves to the Japanese type of jungle fighting, and much of the struggle at the front now consists of patrols stalking patrols, infiltration and counter-infiltration, intermingled with hard battles for strong points in which artillery is brought into use. ...

"British officers have been in the thick of close-in fighting, and I heard many stories of officers leading Indian units in savage charges." (By F. Tillman Durdin, New York Times, December 18, 1941)

[redacted]

Figure 1. Group of Grenade Throwers.

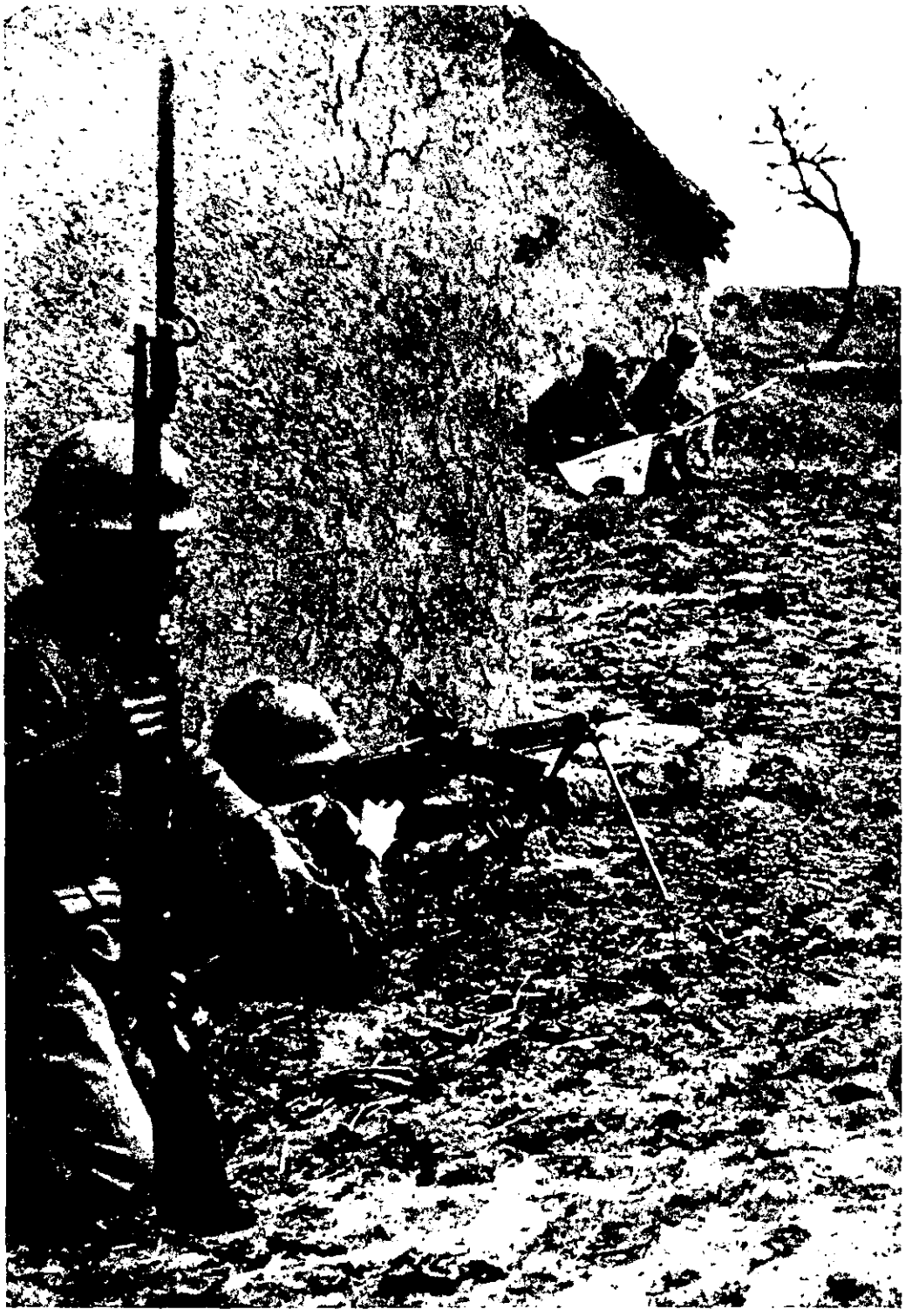

Figure 2. Nambu Light Machine Gun, Model 1922, on Bipod Mount.

Figure 3. Heavy Machine Gun, Model 92 (1932), on Antiaircraft Mount.

Figure 4. Heavy Machine Gun, Probably Model 3 (1914), on Tripod Mount, Being Moved by Hand.

Figure 5. 90-mm. Mortar, Model 94.

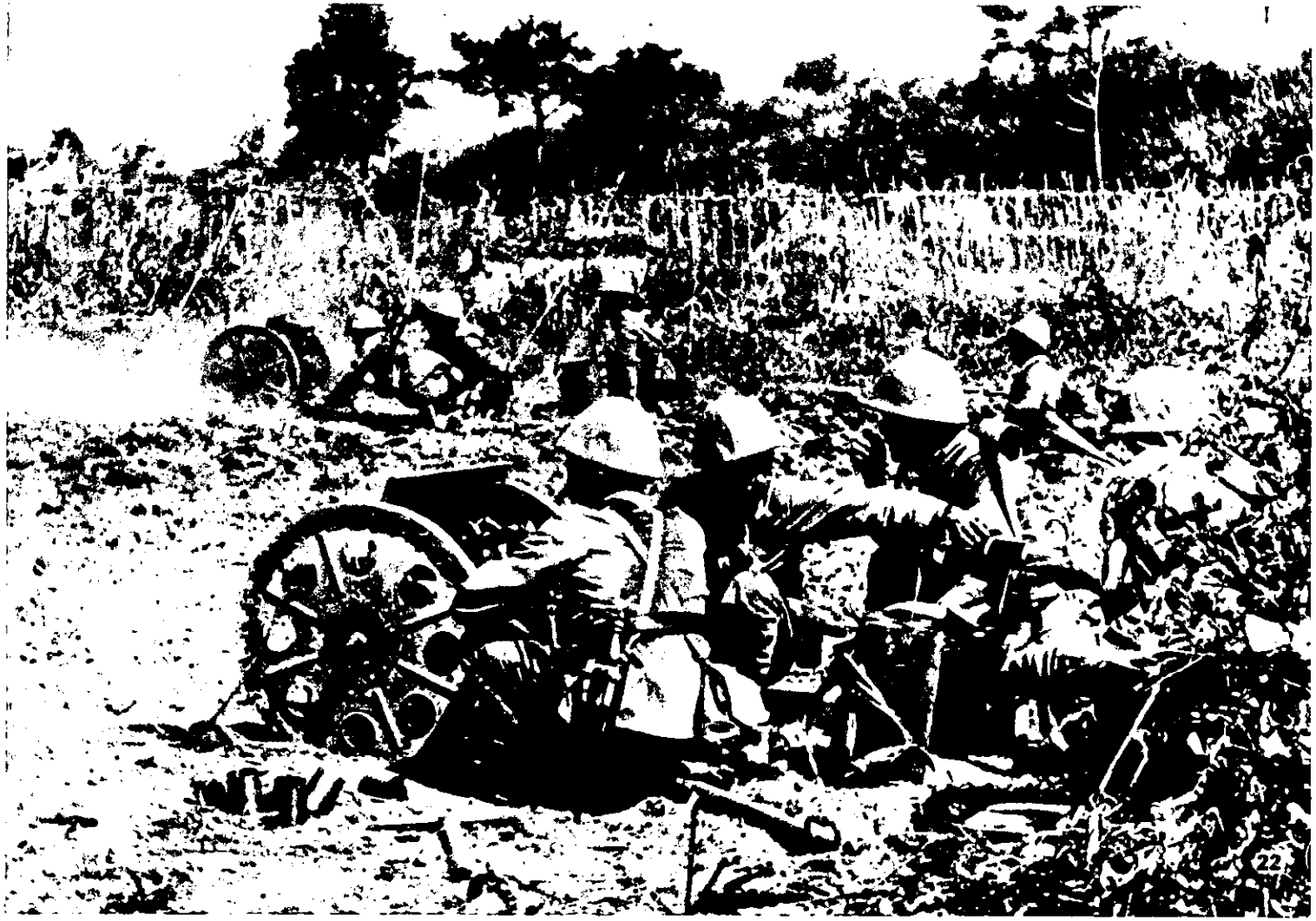

Figure 6. Infantry Battalion Gun, Model 92.

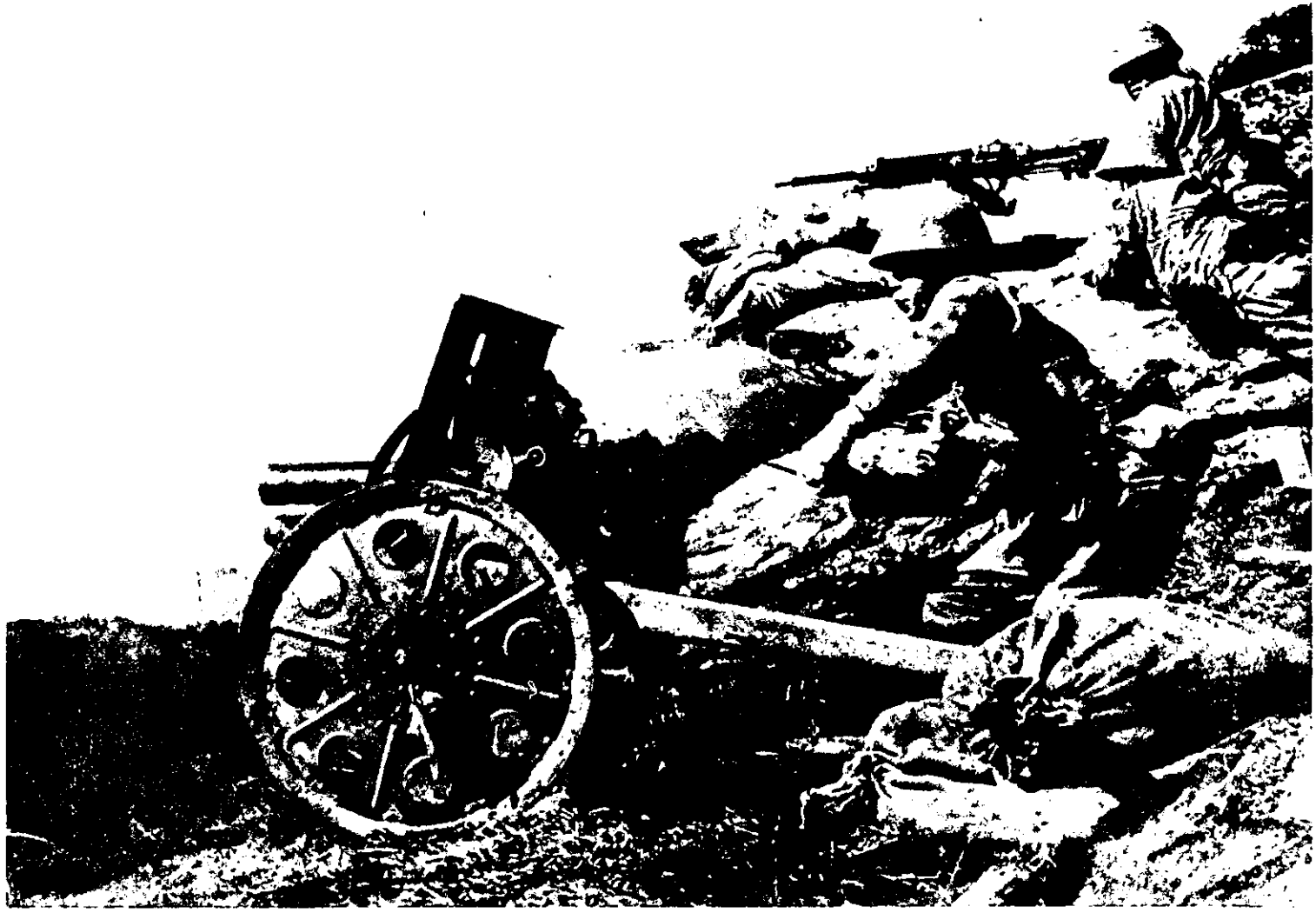

Figure 7. Infantry Battalion Gun, Model 92, with Redesigned Carriage.

Figure 8. Packing Ammunition to Be Transported to the Front.

Figure 9. Transport Units Delivering Ammunition to the Front Lines under Fire.

Figure 10. Cooks Preparing Rice Balls for Soldiers near the Front Lines.

Figure 11. Ration Detail Throwing Rice Balls Wrapped in Straw into the Front-line Trenches.

Figure 12. Japanese Soldier Waiting to Jump into a Trench with Water Canteens.